

Good Morning. My name is Dolly Parikh. We are here in support of the proposed legislation requiring seat belts in school buses. Our son, Vikas Parikh, used to take one of those buses to attend high school in Rocky Hill and Hartford. I am sure that your children and grandchildren are riding in school buses that are equipped similarly to the one our son was on.

The opposition says this is a knee jerk reaction. It saddens me that it took this tragedy for my family and I to fight for this issue, but the issue of seat belts in school buses has been discussed by others for 20 years in these chambers – this is not a knee jerk reaction. Already, New York and New Jersey require seat belts on their public school buses. Over 15 other states have proposed similar legislation. Here in Connecticut, our family suffered an irreplaceable loss. We are not deep pocket lobbyists or special interest groups; we simply want to make sure this kind of tragedy does not happen again.

We understand the arguments brought by the groups opposing this legislation and the costs involved in implementing these proposed changes in this economy. I would like to challenge these lobbyists to offer solutions rather than spending money to fight this cause. How sad it is that we cannot come up with a cost effective and safe solution to save our kids.

What is it going to take to pass this legislation into a law? What are the criteria that you are going to evaluate before making a right decision? How many deaths have occurred in past 100 years? How many children are in wheel chairs? How many children have lost their best friend? How many deaths you are waiting for before you will vote 'yes' for this legislation? Ask yourselves as parents and grandparents, and tell us as the family who lost our son.

Look at today's reality before you vote – school buses travel across state borders on state highways carrying school children, where they are exposed to all the elements and vehicles that we are exposed to in our cars. The law requires us to wear seat belts in our cars, but why does the law not require our children to wear seat belts in school

buses? The opposition will say that school buses are among the safest vehicles on the road, and they will be correct. That does not mean they are 100% invulnerable. The outside may be sturdy, built like a tank. The inside is still as vulnerable as a car without seatbelts. Learn from what the children on the bus are saying – they were thrown around the bus. These children are here today to fight for seat belts on school buses.

Let us start using the common sense approach to making sure that our children are safe when they leave our homes. The proposed legislation, with some creative and cost effective solutions, will provide exactly this.

Again, we are here to support the legislation to require seat belts on school buses and we commend Representative Tony Guerrero for bringing forward this legislation in an attempt to save the precious lives of our children. We hope that the opposition realizes what they are fighting against – they are fighting against the safety of their own children. We hope that you will vote with the thought that even one life saved makes this legislation more than worth it.

In closing we hope no family has to go through what we went through. Stay safe. Thank you.